



February/March 2021

When You Paddle in Milk Long Enough, It Turns to Cream

My father often said this to me when I felt my efforts directed at one goal or another seemed fruitless. I always felt momentarily encouraged when he said it. I say “momentarily” because on reflection I wondered when, exactly, does the milk turn to cream? How long must the non-stop paddling last? That was likely his point. We can’t know. But one must keep on keeping on and when you do, the reward, at the very least, is the elation that a steadfast commitment to a creative purpose that you love and benefits others provides. In addition, this reliability, this faithfulness lets the universe know where to find you.

Who was the author that said, and I paraphrase, “I wouldn’t dream of not sitting down at my desk at the same time every morning to write. What if the muse came and I wasn’t there?” It is so easy to second guess, to sabotage one’s work. I have amused myself with my excuses-de-decade...too young, too busy, too old. But none is true in an absolute sense nor a relative one. In all cultures and for every generation there are subtle and not so subtle dictates that discourage creative confidence. Wherever you are, whatever age, gender, ethnicity, keep on paddling, keep on writing, It’s very important work.

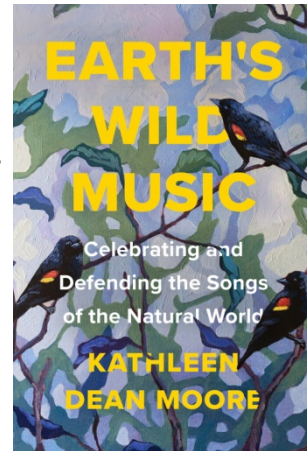
In Memoriam: William Kittredge and Barry Lopez

The world wobbles on its axis without them. Their words rolled like thunder across the pages, deserts, glaciers, rivers, and prairies, daring anyone who read their writings not to feel compelled to enlist in the witnessing, preservation, and protection of wild places. May each of us, in our way, follow their lead, take up the call.

Music and Words from Spring Creek Project

The Spring Creek Project' in Corvallis, Oregon has announced "Animal Interludes," 20 tiny concerts, each an original composition of words and music in honor of a threatened or beloved animal. They are part of the series "Music to Save Earth's Songs," inspired by Kathleen Dean Moore's book *Earth's Wild Music: Celebrating and Defending the Songs of the Natural World* (Counterpoint Press 2021).

Two "Animal Interlude" videos will be aired per week for the next 10 weeks. Follow along with the series on [Music to Save Earth's Songs page](#) or on [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), or [Instagram](#)



Waterston Joins Faculty of OSU Cascades Low Residency MFA

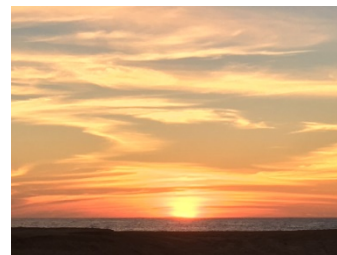
I am honored to be joining the OSU Cascades low residency MFA faculty starting spring semester 2021. The program is directed by author and poet Dr. Jennifer Reimer and anchored by faculty members Beth Alvarado, Fiction and Nonfiction; Christopher Boucher, Fiction; Ru Freeman, Fiction and Poetry; Raquel Gutierrez, Poetry; and T. Geronimo Johnson, Fiction as well as distinguished guest writers. For information visit: www.osucascades.edu

WRITING RANCH WORKSHOPS

The World According to COVID

Writing Down the Baja 2021

The **eleventh annual** "Writing Down the Baja" writing retreat in Todos Santos, BCS, Mexico is currently scheduled for **June 26 through July 4, 2021**. However, there is a chance limited access to COVID vaccinations might force a change in plans again!



The Writing Ranch is predicated on its retreats being held in person and in unique, wild landscapes that free minds and imaginations and play a key role as creative catalyst. If "Writing Down the Baja" can't safely meet on these June/July dates,

then the eleventh annual will be moved to 2022 in its usual February slot. **All information on 2021 retreats is available at www.writingranch.com. Costs and details associated with fall retreats are forthcoming.**



Summer Fishtrap Gathering of Writers

July 12-18, 2021

Registration opens February 4, 2021 for the 34th annual Gathering which this year will appropriately key off the theme of resiliency. Fingers are collectively crossed for an in-person week of risky writing on the shores of Wallowa Lake but the show will go on virtually if need be. The faculty is anchored by African American award-winning poet Frank X. Walker, who will deliver the event's keynote address in addition to leading a workshop. Walker is the author of eleven titles, his most recent collection released in January, 2021: *Isaac Murphy: I Dedicate This Ride*, written from the perspective of the African American jockey Isaac Burns Murphy (1861-1896).

I am honored to be returning as a member of the 2021 faculty to offer a week-long workshop in nonfiction which I am titling "What Is the Invitation?" During the week writers will join me in an exploration of "the elasticity, the resiliency, the wellspring of language, of expression. Let's call it what we want. Let's call it prose. Let's mix and mismatch. Let's reset, upset. Let's rewrite the terms and conditions after this dislocated year of engagement and disassociation, of distress, disbelief, disaster, discrimination, dystopianism. In this generative workshop, let's re-locate, re-associate, re-member, re-up, re-examine the before and now and maybe. Let's re-imagine the invitation, renew our commitment to the story we came to tell." [Find more information here.](#)

Now Study This

Whether writing poetry or prose, it's definitely worth listening again to this important poem and also studying it on the page. How does the use of assonance, consonance, internal rhyme, end rhyme, line length, alliteration, and plays on words stitch it together?

Choose a topic and apply this style to your writing.

The Hill We Climb

by

Amanda Gorman, 2021 Inaugural Poet

[Listen on YouTube](#)



The High Desert Museum is officially accepting submissions for the **2021 Waterston Desert Writing Prize**. The Prize honors creative nonfiction that illustrates artistic excellence, sensitivity to place and desert literacy, with the desert as both subject and setting.

The High Desert Museum adopted the Prize last year. Located in Bend, Oregon, the High Desert Museum brings together wildlife, cultures, art, history and the natural world to convey the wonder of North America's High Desert and looks forward to continuing the exploration of desert landscapes and creating conversations about the issues affecting them.

The submission deadline is May 1, 2021, and emerging, mid-career and established nonfiction writers are invited to apply. **The Prize winner will receive a \$2,500 cash award and a reading and reception at the High Desert Museum.** [Click here to review guidelines and to submit.](#)

Do you know a young, budding writer who has a passion for desert landscapes? Submissions are also being accepted for the **Waterston Student Essay Competition**. [Click here](#) to learn more and to read about last year's winner, Al Lehto.

THIS JUST IN

We are All God's Poems: An Anthology of Hope

Submission Deadline February 10, 2021

Writers and editors Charles Finn and Shann Ray Ferch have issued this invitation: "Please title your poem "We Are All God's Poems" and write a poem of one page or less from whatever comes to you. We envision an anthology of poems with the same title (We Are All God's Poems), speaking in polyphonic, multivalent ways to the human family and the natural world family.

Please send us the poem you've created for this anthology, along with a brief bio (50 words or less), and two or three sentences that describe what influenced you in the writing of the poem.

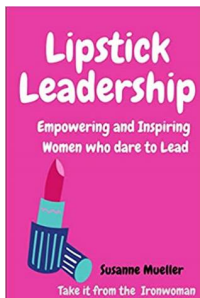
Once we've gathered the poems, we will seek a publisher for this anthology of hope in the midst of our personal, interpersonal, national, and international despair. There will be no payment for the poem or your participation other than the grace and strength of the community of poets who will have gathered in this place. All proceeds (if there are any) will be donated to causes of significant benefit to the marginalized."

For more information: ferch@gonzaga.edu and charlesafinn@gmail.com.

SOURCE Weekly's "Bend Don't Break"

As to that question about ageism...

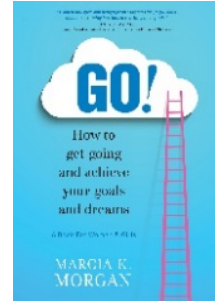
Thanks to Aaron Switzer, SOURCE publisher, and writer/musician Laurel Brauns for hosting me on the January 21, 2020 "Bend Don't Break." [Catch it here.](#)



One on Ones and Alums

Congratulations to "Writing Down the Baja" alumna Susanne Mueller on the recent publication of her book! For more information about Susanne and her global business coaching, [visit her website.](#)

Congratulations are also due to author Marcia K Morgan who is on the homestretch with her book *Should I Change My Name? The Impact of Your Last Name on Identity, Marriage and Happiness*. Morgan is also the author of *Go! How to Get Going and Achieve Your Goals and Dreams at Any Age*.



And welcome to author Alex Maceda of Los Angeles who will work with the Writing Ranch beginning in February as she completes her memoir.

Fly, Already

by

Ellen Waterston

The covey's tri-toes tickle-tap
forth and back across wooden
planks, tiniest staccato riff
on accidental xylophone –
a sun-warmed boardwalk
between cabin and stock pond.
At first Astaire langor, then Ginger
lightning as beeps of imagined
predator spread like downy fire
through the alarmed octet. Faster,
faster footwork is the first line
of frantic response, as though
the wings they sport are only
for effect or, at best, the plan
of last resort. Fly, fly, already
because you can.



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